

the egg-shell, and therefore his figure is not properly formed." And with this she smoothed down the ruffled feathers of his neck, adding, "At all events, as he is a male duck, it won't matter so much. I think he'll prove strong, and be able to fight his way through the world."

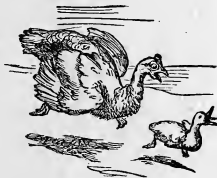
"The other ducklings are elegant little creatures," said the old duck. "Now, make yourself at home; and if you should happen to find an eel's head, you can bring it to me."

And so the family made themselves comfortable.

But the poor duckling who had been the last to creep out of his egg-shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten, pushed about, and made game of, not only by the ducks, but by the hens. They all declared he was much too big; and a guinea-fowl who fancied himself at least an emperor, because he had come into the world with spurs, now puffed himself up like a vessel in full sail and flew at the Duckling, and blustered till his head turned completely red, so that the poor little thing did not know where he could walk or stand, and was quite grieved at being so ugly that the whole farm-yard scouted him.



Nor did matters mend the next day, or the following ones, but rather grew worse and worse. The poor Duckling was hunted down by everybody. Even his sisters were so unkind to him, that they were continually saying, "I wish the cat would run away with you, you ugly creature!" while his mother added, "I wish you had never been born!" And the ducks pecked at him, the



hens struck him, and the girl who fed the poultry used to kick him.

So he ran away, and flew over the palings. The little birds in the bushes were startled, and took wing. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the Duckling, as he closed his eyes in despair, but presently he roused up again, and ran on further till he came to a large marsh inhabited by wild ducks. Here he spent the whole night—and tired and sorrowful enough he was.

On the following morning, when the wild ducks rose and saw